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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 001321

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: INDONESIA GETS READY FOR LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS  
(NINE MONTHS AWAY)

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph L. Novak, reasons 1.4 (b+d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: This week marks the formal start of campaigning for the April 2009 national legislative elections. The Election Commission has authorized 34 parties to contest the election. Most of the parties are new and small, and they are not expected to be competitive. Parties are now drawing up their formal candidate lists. Although the elections are months away, many Indonesians--shifting into another gear--are eagerly entering the political season. Mission continues to meet with local and international groups on ways it can support the electoral process. END SUMMARY.

GETTING READY -- FOR APRIL

12. (SBU) July 12 marks the first day of campaigning for Indonesia's national legislative election for seats in the Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat (DPR). The election is scheduled to take place on April 9, 2009. (Note: The presidential election is slated to take place in July 2009.) In the next several months, candidates and their parties are allowed--per specific Election Commission rules--to campaign in small settings and to put up posters and banners. Until one month before the election, however, the rules prohibit big rallies or demonstrations, and other trappings of large-scale campaigning.

34 PARTIES TO CONTEST

13. (SBU) On July 7, the Election Commission confirmed that 34 parties can contest the DPR elections. Sixteen of these parties automatically qualified due to their performance in the 2004 election (i.e., they now hold seats in the DPR) and 18 of the parties are new (having proven that they have the requisite membership and party structure). The older and more established parties--Golkar, the Indonesian Party of Democratic Struggle (PDI-P), the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), the Democratic Party (PD), the United Development Party (PPP), etc.--are expected to dominate the election. (Note: The Election Commission, for various reasons, has come under criticism for its efforts to prepare for the

legislative elections. It is possible that it might revise its determination regarding the 34 authorized parties after further review.)

¶4. (U) None of the new parties is expected to make a very strong showing, though it is possible that several might enter the DPR. (Note: One party that potentially could do well is Hanura, which is led by former General Wiranto. The party seems well-financed and well-organized.) While it is not clear how they will fare, the new parties do have some intriguing names like:

- the Archipelago Republic Party;
- the Indonesian Democratic Party of Devotion;
- the People's Conscience Party (Hanura);
- the National Sun Party, etc.

¶5. (U) The number of parties contesting in 2009 will be above the number in 2004 (24). Forty-eight parties contested in 1999, the first national election held after the fall of the Suharto regime. Although voter lists need to be finalized, roughly 180 million people are slated to vote.

#### PARTIES FORMALIZING LISTS

¶6. (U) Parties are now drawing up their candidate lists. These lists have to be formalized and submitted to the Election Commission within the next two months. The larger parties are expected to field candidates for most of the 560 seats up for grabs. (Note: The DPR currently has 550 seats;

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10 more have been added.)

¶7. (C) This whole process is creating tensions among politicians who are waiting to see whether they are chosen (or re-chosen) by their party to run. On this very theme, Yuddy Chrisnandi, M.P. of Golkar, told Pol/C on July 9 that he had run afoul of his party leadership for opposing the recent fuel price hike and on other issues. He said he understood that the Golkar leadership was thinking about jettisoning him as a candidate for 2009. If Golkar did not pick him, he hoped that another party would.

#### ENTERING THE POLITICAL SEASON

¶8. (C) Indonesians have really taken to politics since the fall of Suharto and love all the trappings. They seem to be eagerly entering the political season, although the April election is nine months away. Given the considerable lead time, it is going to be a very long campaign and it only leads into another election--that for president. With various polls flying about, the DPR election is still up for grabs with most observers expecting a modest re-arrangement of seats and a situation--like now--where no one party completely dominates. That said, given the volatility engendered by rising prices for fuel and food plus other factors, there are bound to be surprises. Mission continues to meet with local and international groups on ways it can support the electoral process.

HUME